

# Making Release Time Work

An essential component of most T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships is paid release time. Because most T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients work full time and often have children of their own, paid release time helps them balance the responsibilities of going to school with their work and family obligations. In evaluations of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®, sponsors often identify the release time component of the scholarship as one of the more difficult aspects of T.E.A.C.H. As a sponsor or potential sponsor, you may recognize the importance of paid release time, but you also may be challenged with how to balance this requirement with your need for full staffing in your programs. Below are some creative solutions that can help with the struggle of providing paid release time and increase the likelihood that your teachers are successful in school.

- Offer release time during rest time so scholarship recipients can study or use the center's computer for papers and class projects.
- Schedule release time at a time when teacher:child ratios go down. Scholarship recipients can leave work early with pay and, if necessary, other qualified staff can substitute.
- Allow scholarship recipients to come in late or leave early while receiving usual pay.
- Pay scholarship recipients for their lunch breaks. But remember, recipients can't work over 40 hours without overtime pay.
- Hire a substitute specifically to cover T.E.A.C.H. recipients' leave time. This usually works best for centers that sponsor several employees.
- Bank leave time and give scholarship recipients a whole day off before a major test, or give them half days off so it is easier to bring in a substitute.
- Use release time reimbursements to help with other T.E.A.C.H. related costs. Center reimbursements for release time are paid based on the time given as documented by signed statements from the teacher and center director. If release time can be given without additional costs, then centers can actually bank resources that can be used to help pay for their costs for tuition or a compensation raise or bonus or to help with other T.E.A.C.H. related costs. Many centers find ways to offer release time when enrollment is lower and substitutes are not needed.

Paid release time acknowledges the time commitment a T.E.A.C.H. recipient is making to your program; not only is she/he going to school but she/he is committing to stay employed in your program for a year after her/his contract is completed.

## Remember

Sponsors have complete flexibility for how release time is managed within their early childhood setting. But under no circumstances should providing release time be done at the detriment of maintaining appropriate teacher:child ratios.

**Don't forget.** You can always contact your T.E.A.C.H. counselor to discuss release time strategies.

*"We love having this scholarship to discuss with potential job candidates. We have seen that planning for the children in a variety of content areas is now easier for our teachers. They have increased self-confidence and a better understanding of developmentally appropriate practice. This is a great way to reward good employees in our program."*

– Missouri Scholarship Sponsor



A product of the  
T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center

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